

## Article - Business Regulation

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§5–311.

(a) Subject to the provisions of this section, the Director or the Director's designee shall commence proceedings on a complaint made by any person to the Director.

(b) A complaint shall:

- (1) be in writing;
- (2) state specifically the facts on which the complaint is based; and
- (3) be made under oath by the person who submits the complaint.

(c) (1) The Director or the Director's designee shall review each complaint and shall attempt to negotiate a settlement of the complaint between the complainant and the registrant, permit holder, or any other person subject to the registration or permit provisions of this title.

(2) Notwithstanding § 5–102 of this title, the Director or the Director's designee may receive and attempt to negotiate a settlement to resolve complaints concerning persons required to file statements under § 5–405 of this title and in connection with the operation of a cemetery or crematory or the sale of preneed goods.

(3) The Director may not take any actions described in subsection (d)(1) and (2) of this section for complaints involving persons exempt under § 5–102 of this title.

(d) If the Director or the Director's designee is unable to negotiate a settlement of the complaint, the Director may:

- (1) at the request of either party, refer the complaint to the Office of the Attorney General or the Office of Administrative Hearings for binding arbitration, if both parties agree to binding arbitration;
- (2) initiate an investigation; or
- (3) dismiss the complaint.

(e) If, after investigation, the Director determines that there is a reasonable basis to believe that there are grounds for disciplinary action under § 5–310 of this subtitle, the Director shall provide the person against whom the action is contemplated notice and an opportunity for a hearing under § 5–312 of this subtitle.

(f) (1) If, after investigation, the Director determines that there is not a reasonable basis to believe that there are grounds for disciplinary action, the Director shall dismiss the complaint.

(2) Any party aggrieved by the dismissal may take a judicial appeal in accordance with the provisions of Title 10 of the State Government Article.

(g) Once a complaint has been referred for binding arbitration, the registrant, permit holder, or any other person subject to the registration or permit provisions of this title shall comply with the terms of the settlement.

(h) (1) The Director shall adopt guidelines that establish a schedule for the prompt and timely processing and resolution of each complaint made to the Director.

(2) Beginning December 31, 1998, and on or before December 31 of each year thereafter, the Director shall report, subject to § 2–1257 of the State Government Article, to the General Assembly on:

(i) the number of complaints resolved within the schedule adopted under paragraph (1) of this subsection;

(ii) the number of complaints and the number of inquiries received under subsection (c)(2) of this section by the type of registrant, permit holder, or exemption from the registration and permit requirements of this title;

(iii) the number of complaints and the number of inquiries received under subsection (c)(2) of this section by persons subject to, but not in compliance with, the registration and permit requirements of this title;

(iv) the nature of complaints and inquiries received under subsection (c)(2) of this section, including whether complaints are related to the illegal recycling of graves;

(v) the type of purchase, focus of dissatisfaction, and type of resolution for both complaints and inquiries;

(vi) whether complaints reported under item (i) of this paragraph were resolved through negotiation, binding arbitration, or another method; and

(vii) any disciplinary or enforcement actions taken against a registrant, permit holder, or a person subject to, but not in compliance with, the registration and permit requirements of this title.

(3) The Director shall provide a copy of the annual report required under paragraph (2) of this subsection to each member of the Advisory Council.

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